

[Early-Day Portland]

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[Beliefs and customs - [??]

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Folklore Collection (or Type)

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Title Rush Mendenhall of Indian wars...

Place of origin Portland, Oregon Date 5/16/37

Project worker Sara B. Wrenn

Project editor

Remarks

Form A

Circumstances of Interview

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date May 16, 1939

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon

Subject Rush Mendenhall of Indian Wars - Early-day Portland - White House Tavern - Toll Road - Justice Courts

Name and address of informant Mr. Bert Mendenhall 209 Railway Exchange Bldg., Portland, Oregon

Date and time of interview May 16, 1939; 11:00 to 12:30 P.M.

Place of interview Law office of informant

Library of Congress

Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant

Miss Nina B. Johnson, Lake Grove, Oregon

Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Small consulting room of usual type. One window; desk and table, two chairs; two or three pictures on wall. Partition of glass, shutting off outer office. Office building of eight or ten stories, constructed in the early 1900's.

Form B

Personal History of Informant

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

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Name and address of informant Mr. Bert Mendenhall 209 Railway Exchange Bldg., Portland, Oregon

Information obtained should supply the following facts:

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1. Ancestry
2. Place and date of birth
3. Family
4. Places lived in, with dates
5. Education, with dates
6. Occupations and accomplishments with dates
7. Special skills and interests
8. Community and religious activities
9. Description of informant
10. Other points gained in interview

1. Father, Rush Mendenhall Quaker English

Mother, Esther Worden Mendenhall English

2. Washington County, Oregon. August 29, 1861.

3. Wife, Cone Daughter, Ruth Lien Sons, Rush Mendenhall, Clifford Mendenhall, Harry Mendenhall

4. Home always in Oregon. Since boyhood in Portland.

5. Public schools of Portland. Studied law in private law office. Admitted to bar in 1884.

6. Practice of law and ranching.

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7. Outdoor life.

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8. Sons and daughters of Indian War Veterans; Sons and Daughters of Oregon Pioneers. No church affiliation. Mother one of founders of Portland Unitarian church.

9. Medium, well-built, with brown eyes, dark gray hair and clipped mustache. Well-groomed, and affable in manner.

10. ———

Form C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

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Subject Rush Mendenhall of Indian Wars — Early-day Portland — Justice Courts — White House Tavern

Name and address of informant Bert Mendenhall 209 Railway Exchange Bldg., Portland, Oregon

Text: My dad, Rush Mendenhall, crossed the Plains in '47. He was captain of the train. Later he took an active part in the Indian wars of the Northwest. He was sergeant-

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orderly in the Nesmith company. The missionaries at that time had plenty of meat, which they traded to the immigrants for clothing. Well, dad's company was short on food, and particularly short on meat. The men were getting mighty tired of a diet of cayuse meat. When they heard the squealing of pigs at the mission station, that was just about the last straw in whetting their appetities. One night two or three of them went out on what is now called AWOL. The next morning everybody in camp had some nice fried porkchops. And that same morning the missionaries discovered they were short several nice fat porkers. They instituted a search, that included a visit to the soldiers' encampment, but on asking questions all the reply they got was "See the orderly," "See the orderly." "The orderly is the one for you to see, if anybody saw the pigs, he did." The orderly was dad. They hunted for him, but, strangely enough, he was no place to be found.

It was in 1848 that dad and a partner built a 63-ton schooner at Linn City. I don't remember the name of the schooner. Don't know if I ever knew it. Anyway after the schooner was built dad and his partner realized they had no navigator, 2 nor anybody else who knew anything about navigating a ship. About that time there happened to be a good sized British vessel anchored at Vancouver. Dad and his partner made a quiet visit over to Vancouver, and when they returned they brought two British sailors with them. With his full complement of crew and navigators enlisted from Vancouver dad sailed his ship down the river. When he reached Baker's Bay he found it expedient to put in there. It seems the British were on his trail, but their craft was too big for the shallow waters of Baker's Bay, a fact of which dad was aware when he went in there, so, eluding his pursuers, he made the run safely down to California, where the gold mining excitement was at its height. Shortly afterward he sold the schooner and with the proceeds went into the business of furnishing miners' supplies at Sacramento. He made some money, went back east and married, and returned with his bride on the "Governor Morton" around the Horn. He and a partner bought land from the Spanish in California, but in that they got swindled, so eventually he came back to Oregon. He built the old courthouse at Lafayette in '58 or '59. When he started it the brickmakers raised the price of brick on him, so he bought five acres of land

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just outside the town limits, built some kilns and made his own bricks. Then they raised the price of lumber on him, so he bought a little water-power mill up on the Chehalem mountains; he bought some standing cedar, and so he made his own lumber and shingles, and in the end found he cleaned up \$2,000.00 more than he otherwise would have on the courthouse contract, and had a brick plant and lumber mill besides. With a partner by the name of Price, who was father of the girl Senator Mitchell afterward married, dad went into the mercantile business, with a store at Amity and one at Bethel. In doing this they staked a fellow by the name of Holman, who was in charge of the stores. It wasn't long before word reached dad and his partner that if they hurried they might get to Amity and Bethel in time to find the buildings — and that was about all they did find. Holman and everything else had disappeared.

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Yes, I used to go to most of the dances round about. North Plains was a popular place. We danced on a puncheon floor in a log cabin, and all we had was one fiddle to dance to. They were most square dances and I never cared much for those. I remember our first dancing master was a man named Cardinell. He had a daughter who helped him. Afterward she was Mrs. Cyrus Dolph and became pretty tony.

For a long time I lived out on South Third and Hall streets, here in Portland. The Manns, John Mann and his wife, who founded the Mann Home on the east side, lived up the street just a block away. They were awful good church people in their later years. I can remember when old John Mann — though he wasn't old then — started his money-making out of fast horses and his livery stable. Mrs. Mann raised flowers. She got a young fellow to sell them for her. He peddled them about town every place, bawdy houses and all.

Do I recall anything about the old White House, out on the Riverdale Road? I'll say I do. I was there a lot in my young days. The White House was started, if I recall rightly, by a man named Leonard. H. C., I think, were his initials. The road leading out to the place was the first macadamized road in this part of the country, and for a long time it was known as

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the Macadam Road, where anybody who owned a horse, fast or otherwise, went out to take their girls buggy-riding. All the gay folks in town went out to the White House where no questions was asked and most anything could be had. I was under age, I remember, and couldn't get anything in town, but nobody questioned me out there. Once, heh! heh! I saw a fellow come running out of the place with no hat or coat on and another fellow was chasing him and yelling: "I'll learn you how to break up my family," and about then he caught up with him and knocked him out. Then another fellow ran up with a pan of dishwater that he threw on him and somebody else emptied a cuspidor over him and pretty soon they brought him to.

Leonard kept up the Macadam Road through levying a toll. It began at about the foot of Hall street, if I remember correctly, where the toll gate was.

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About half way out there was a place called the Red House, but that was later and not high-toned like the White House.

When I began the practice of law I was in my brother Ed's office. There was another young fellow in the office named Gordon Hayes. He was afterwards county judge of Clackamas county. My brother turned over little cases to us to start us off, such as those in the justice courts. We couldn't understand why we lost 'em all — every damned one. We couldn't imagine what was wrong. Well, of course, we weren't on to the ropes. The justice court was held in a room over a saloon, and the jury was selected by the constable, who picked 'em up in the saloon downstairs. All the jurors got was a dollar. Jack Evers kept the saloon. The jury would go into deliberation in a little room back of the court. There was a window in the little room, and the jurors had a gallon can with a rope tied to the bail. They would put their money in the bucket or can and then lower it out the window and knock it against the back door of the saloon. Then the barkeep would come out, peek in the bucket to see if there was any money, and if there was, it was o.k., he'd send it up full of beer or whatever they wanted. Then the jury would come to an agreement, but what they agreed

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on, depended on which side furnished the money for the bucket. Once there was a State case involving a criminal charge. The jury was pretty full that time. It brought in a verdict that read, "State guilty as charged."

It was about '84 or '85 that there was a justice court out on Ninth and Glisan streets, where the front room was the bar and the rear room with a side entrance, the place for holding court. The justice of the peace owned the place and the barkeeper was the constable.

At one time, when the justice court was held opposite of where the courthouse now stands, there was a case where a Jew junk-man among the jurors kept asking who the attorney for the defence was. When he found out, he said, "Vell, I'm for him.

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Right or wrong, I'm for him," Later, when the verdict was brought in for the defense, the lawyer for the plaintiff said to the Jew, "Why, what d'ya go against me for? I'm a friend o' yours. You remember, I was down in your place not long ago, looking at a stove?" "Sure, I remember," answered the Jew, "you vas down in my place, an' you vas lookin' at a stove, but did you [puy?] the stove?"

Form D

Extra Comment

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Comment:

The interviewer is of the opinion that Mr. Mendenhall possesses considerable other information of a folklore nature that would be of interest, but he refused to grant further time in an interview at the present time.